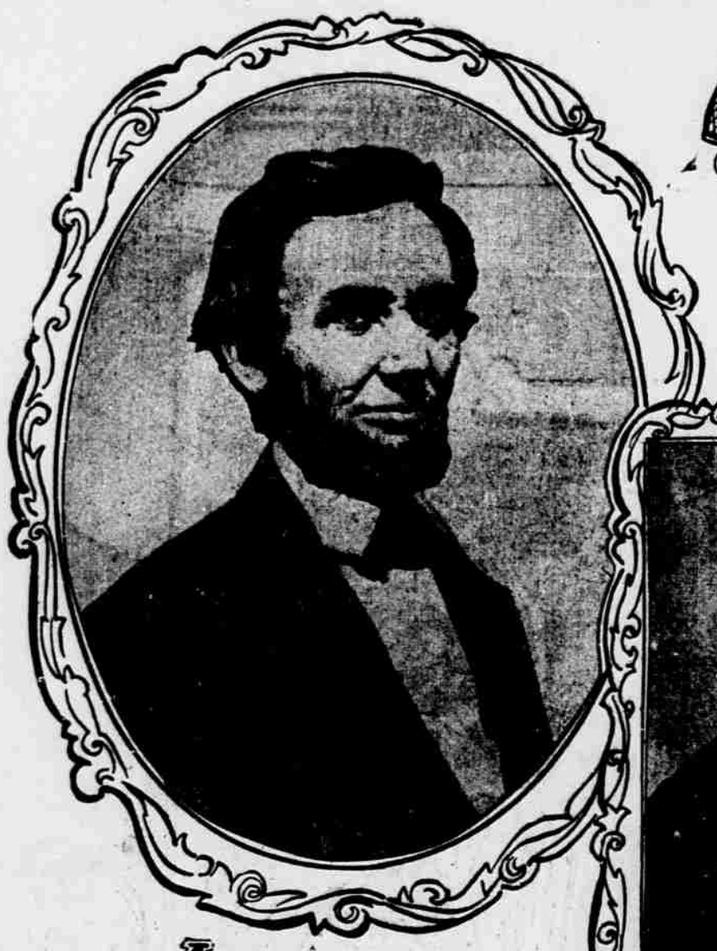
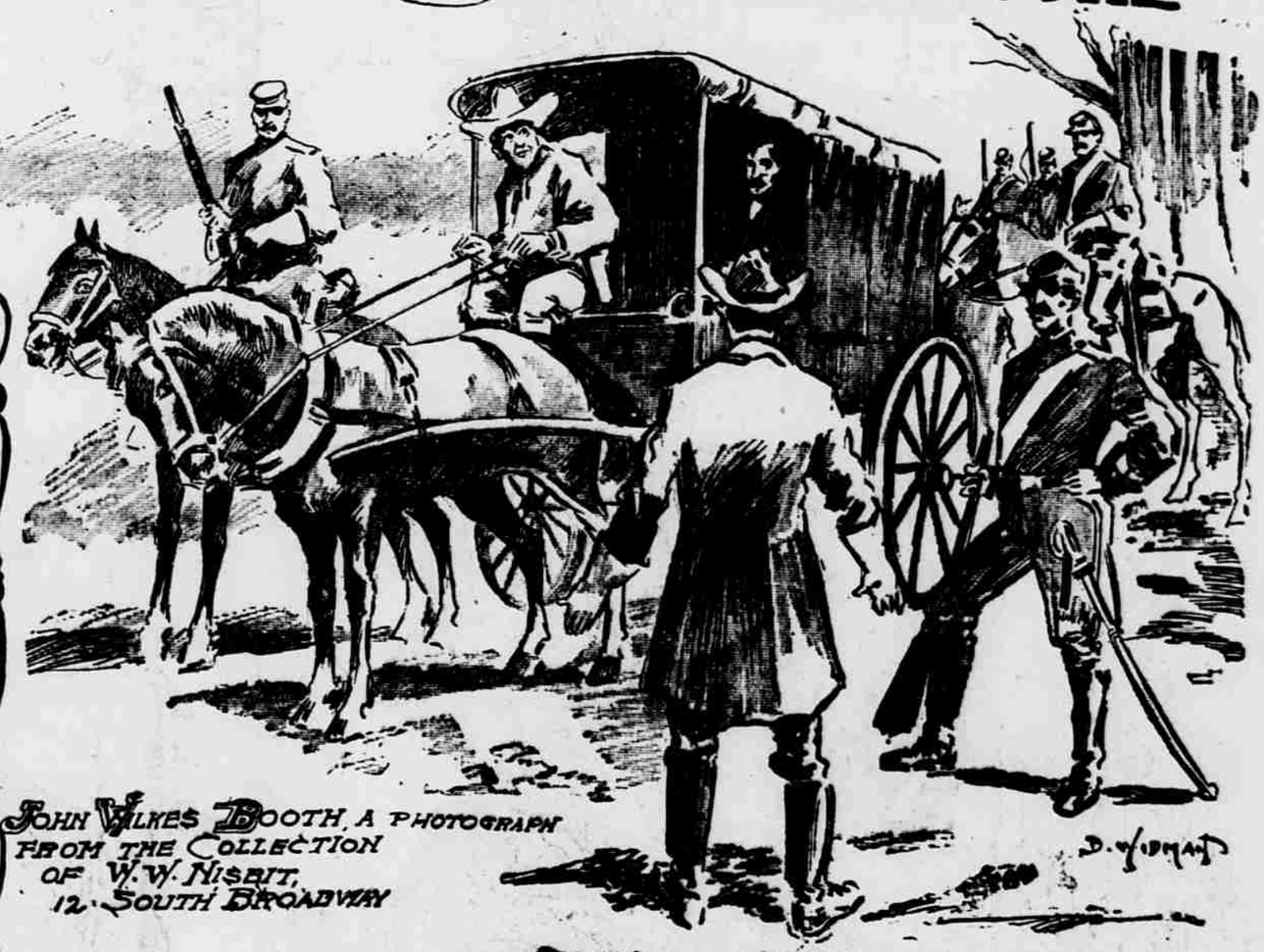
A NEW CHAPTER IN THE DEATH CHASE OF JOHN WILKES BOOTH



ABRAHAM LINCOLN IN 1861

JOHN WILKES BOOTH, A PHOTOGRAPH FROM THE COLLECTION OF W. W. NISBIT, 12 SOUTH BROADWAY



SITTING ERECT AND MOTIONLESS ON ONE OF THE SEATS OF THE CARRY-ALL WAS THE SAME STRANGER.

WRITTEN FOR THE SUNDAY REPUBLIC.

It always has been supposed that when John Wilkes Booth, in his fight after the assassination of Lincoln, crossed the Rappahannock shortly before he took refuge in the barn of the Garrett farm, where, according to the accepted version of the affair, he was shot by Sergeant Boston Corbett, of the Sixteenth New York Cavalry, he was accompanied only by his accomplice, Harold, and by three Confederate officers, who were returning to their homes, and who, taking pity on his forlorn condition, turned back to aid him further in his flight. These officers were Major M. B. Ruggles, Lieutenant A. R. Bainbridge and Captain Jett.

The interesting narrative printed below shows, however, that there was a fourth man, E. Wellford Mason, on the scow ferry-boat, which was poled across the river by a negro.

At the time Mr. Mason did not know that one of the men crossing with him was Lincoln's assassin, and when he made the discovery motives of safety led him to maintain silence about it.

It has been kept a secret until now, a fact which makes the narrative a peculiarly interesting contribution to the history of the great tragedy and the swift retribution which followed it.

Lincoln was shot in Ford's Theater, Washington, the night of Good Friday (April 14), 1865.

It was during the second scene of the third act of "Our American Cousin," in which Laura Keene was taking a benefit. Booth, whose last appearance had been on the stage of the same theater as Pescara in "The Apostate," was well known to the attaches of the house, and no one thought of questioning him when he made his way around the rear of the dress circle to the passage leading to the President's box.

A few minutes later a pistol shot startled the house. The President's head fell forward on his breast.

A man—John Wilkes Booth—leaped from the box to the stage. As he landed his spurs caught in the folds of an American flag used in the decorations. He fell, breaking his left leg, but managed to regain his feet, turn to the audience, shout "Sic semper tyrannis," escape by the stage door, so familiar to him, mount a horse held there in readiness, and dash away.

For six days Booth hid in woods near a farm, about thirty-five miles from Washington. April 22 he managed to cross the Potomac and he and Harold reached the Rappahannock at Port Conway April 24. There the negro driver refused to take them further, and Harold appealed for aid to Ruggles, Bainbridge and Jett, who had just landed from the scow. Ruggles has stated that Booth was in a pitiable condition. His broken leg had been rudely bandaged in pasteboard splints, and was so swollen that it seemed to Ruggles that nothing short of eventual amputation could save his life. These men saw him across the river and as far as the Garrett farm, some three miles distant.

That very morning in Washington Lieutenant Edward F. Doherty, of the Sixteenth New York Cavalry, received orders to take twenty-five men and scour the Rappahannock district. He reached Port Conway the following day, and, showing Booth's photograph to some women in the house of the owner of the ferry, he judged from their looks that they had seen Booth cross there not so very long before.

That night, at Bowling Green, Lieutenant Doherty located Booth at the Garrett farm, ascertained that he and Harold were in hiding in the barn and had the building set on fire. It was then early morning of April 26. Harold came out and surrendered. At that moment Boston Corbett, who had been stationed by a large crack in the side of the barn, saw, by the firelight, Booth aim a carbine as if to shoot either Doherty or Harold.

Corbett fired, his bullet entering the back of Booth's head only about an inch below the spot where Booth's bullet had struck Lincoln.

According to Doherty's narrative in the Century Magazine, he borrowed a needle from Miss Garret, sewed the body in a saddle blanket and put it on an old wagon, and, reaching Washington at 2 o'clock on the morning of April 26, placed Harold and the dead assassin on the monitor Montauk. On Booth's body were found a diary, a large bowie knife, two pistols, a compass and a draft on Canada for $90.

BY J. SYDNOR MASSEY.

For thirty-eight long years the name of John Wilkes Booth has been going the rounds as has no other name in all the world. For thirty-eight years newspapers, magazines and books have been telling the story of his assassination of President Lincoln, of his subsequent perilous flight from the national capital city through rugged rural regions and over rivers and creeks, and of his capture in Caroline County, Virginia, by Federal soldiers. But no historican or journalist has made the story full and complete by giving the names of all the gentlemen who crossed the Rappahannock River with Booth, in that historic ferry-boat, just before he met his tragic end in the Garrett barn.

No newspaper, magazine or book has been able to go further on this point than give the names of Bainbridge, Ruggles and Jett. Mr. E. Wellford Mason, one of the most prominent citizens of King George County, Virginia, who chanced to cross the Rappahannock in the boat with the fleeting assassin, succeeded in concealing his name at the time, as he also succeeding in getting "out of the way," in order to avoid being arrested and taken to Washington as a witness, and as years passed he stoutly declined to let it be known that he was "the tall young man" whose name could not be learned, his sole reason for keeping the "secret" being his desire and determination to avoid publicity and newspaper notoriety.

Now that the newspapers state—and the statement is accepted as a fact—that the recent death of Messrs. Bainbridge and Ruggles removes from earth the last of the gentlemen who crossed the Rappanhannock with Booth on the memorable occasion, Mr. Mason consents, for the first time, that his name be made public in that connection.

Aside from the fact that Mr. Wellford Mason's prominence, social standing, high character and reputation for veracity entitle all of his statements to consideration, there are indisputable proofs that he was one of the little company that crossed the river with John Wilkes Booth.

While Booth was hiding in the jungles of Charles County, Maryland, awaiting an opportunity to cross the Potomac into Virginia, the news of the assassination, and of the large reward offered for information that would lead to the capture of the President's slayer, spread through the rural districts on both sides of the Potomac, but there was no idea or thought more foreign to the minds of the inhabitants than that Booth would ever set foot on the soil of that section of Virginia.

No one even dreamed that a fugitive from justice would jeopardise his chances of escape by including this neck of marshes, creeks and guiches in his route. Hence, strangers passing through this county were not even regarded suspiciously or "eyed curiously," notwithstanding the reward offered by the United States Government.

SEEKING MEDICAL AID

When the opportunity came for Booth to resume his flight by crossing the Potomac into Virginia, under the cover of night, he did not go direct from Mr. Jones's, in Maryland, to the home of Mrs. E. R. Quesenberry, on Machodoc Creek, in King George County, Virginia, as has been stated, but landed first at Barnsfield, the home of Doctor Abram Barnes Hooe, in the hope and for the purpose of receiving needed medical treatment by Doctor Hooe—treatment that would enable him to make his arduous journey with less discomfort.

Finding that Doctor Hooe's magnificent mansion, which had so long overlooked the broad Potomac for many miles, had been reduced to a heap of ashes, and Doctor Hooe and family gone, Booth and his companion, Harold, rowed some two miles further down the river to the mouth of Machodoc Creek, thence a mile or so up the creek to the Quesenberry home.

In the vicinity of Mrs. Quesenberry's there lived a man who owned a one-horse spring wagon—one of the few such vehicles to be found anywhere in all this section at the close of the war, and this man agreed to convey Booth from Hooe's neck across King George County to Port Conway, on the Rappahannock River.

So cleverly and successfully did Booth keep his identity concealed and so unsuspecting were the people here that he was enabled to consume all this time in getting from "Hooe's Neck," on the Potomac, to Port Conway, on the Rappahannock, without being detected, Mr. E. Wellford Mason, who had just recently returned to his home in King George from the Confederate service, started to Caroline County, on the south side of the Rappahannock, for the purpose of purchasing a wagon.

Arriving at the ferry at Port Conway, Mr. Mason unexpectedly met his acquaintances, Messrs. Ruggles, Bainbrige and Jett. With them and among others about the ferry was a stranger who attracted his attention by a constantly and remarkably maintained reticence.

There was nothing about Harold, the other stranger, to attract his attention, and he soon lost sight of him. But the reticent yet restless and peculiar manner of the spare, pale, unshaven-faced stranger aroused his curiosity, and when an opportunity was afforded Mr. Mason remarked to Mr. Ruggles that it was rather strange that he (Ruggles) did not introduce the stranger. However, no introduction followed.

Soon the party of men—including Mr. Mason—was in the ferryboat and going toward the Caroline shore. Here Mr. Mason noticed that Mr. Bainbridge carried a crutch and a cane, without using or seeming to have use for either, whereupon he thus queried: "Say, Bainbridge, what in the d—— are you carrying a crutch and a cane for, while you are without an ailment?"

"Oh, well, just for amusement," replied Mr. Bainbridge, after a brief pause. Mr. Mason said: "Darn poor amusement, it seems to me—a crutch and cane carried around for amusement; you must be hard up for amusement, Bainbridge." The crutch and cane belonged to Booth, but Mason did not know this.

When the ferryboat landed on the Caroline shore the party separated, Mr. Mason going one way, and Booth, Harold, Jett, Bainbridge and Ruggles going another, Mr. Mason having failed to ascertain the name of the "stranger."

Mr. Mason returned to his home that night, and the following morning started back to Caroline, with a pair of horses with which to bring the wagon of which he went in search the previous day. This time he found a number of soldiers and others at Port Conway, all of whom, it seemed, had just crossed over from the other side of the river.

In the midst of the group of soldiers was an old-fashioned, curtained carryall wagon, which was being driven by a colored man, whom Mr. Mason had known for many years.

Sitting erect and motionless on one of the seats of the carryall was the same "stranger" who had attracted Mr. Mason's attention when crossing the river the previous day. Not suspecting that the "stranger" was dead, Mr. Mason approached the driver and asked: "Who is this you have here in your wagon, old man?"

The darky, in a suppressed and trembling voice, answered: "It is Booth, the man what kilt the President. You see he is stone dead now—dey done shot him—and dey got me here carrying de corpse over yonder somewhor, to de Potomac."

In the presence of the soldiers, and without weighing his words, Mr. Mason exclaimed, "Great God! this is the same man that crossed the river with me yesterday—Booth! Is that Booth? Why, I was with him yesterday and did not know who he was!"

Mr. Mason then made inquiries, whereupon the colored man told him about the capture, the burning of the barn, etc.; and told where the fatal bullet struck Booth, etc. Mr. Mason here raised a curtain, and, on seeing the wound in Booth's head, just behind the left ear, exclaimed:

"Why, that was no rifle ball at all. You told me that he was shot with a rifle, didn't you? I'll swear a pistol bullet made that hole in Booth's head! No rifle in this crowd carries so small a bullet as that! I've been handling rifles and pistols too long not to know a pistol ball from a rifle ball."

WAS HE A SUICIDE?

"Why, he must have killed himself with a little pistol," continued Mr. Mason.

Mr. Mason's gratuitous exclamations and comments, and especially his declaration that he crossed the river with Booth the previous day, now attracted Federal soldiers to his side, and he would have been then and there arrested and taken to Washington as a witness or a "suspicious character" but for a timely incident. It seemed that the crowd was minus a horse or two with which to cross King George to the Potomac, and while Mr. Mason was elaborately discussing the wound, etc., his horses were objects to be coveted.

One of the party, not of the soldiers, remarked, with an apparent sigh of relief, "We'll take one of this man's horses." Mr. Mason, forgetting his dignity, exclaimed, "I'll be —— if you or any other man on God's green earth shall take one of my horses! No, sir! I'll shoot the man who attempts to take one of my horses!"

Colonel Congery attracted by sharp words, hastened to the scene and, in a most gentlemanly and courteous manner, assured Mr. Mason that his horse should not be touched, remarking: "We came here for but one purpose, and that was to get Booth. We have him—that's all we want ,and no one in this crowd shall molest you or anything belonging to you or any one else."

The horse episode attracted attention from the statement that Mr. Mason had been with Booth, and he lost no time in getting away from Port Conway. Being reminded later in the day that what he had said would cause his arrest as a witness, he hied himself to the neighboring jungle and remained in hiding for some days.

From that day to this Mr. Mason has stoutly adhered to the theory and belief that Booth took his own life rather than surrender or be captured alive.

He declares that it is impossible for the wound in Booth's head to have been made by a rifle bullet, arguing that the bullet was no larger than a certain variety of the English pea—a smaller bullet than was carried by any "shooting iron" used by soldiers at that time.

He argues other points in support of his suicide theory, and says that his first conviction that Booth was shot by a small pistol in his own hand was based not only upon his extended knowledge of and experience with firearms, but upon a wound which he received himself during the war.

The village of Port Conway, where Mr. Mason met Booth and party, and where they crossed the Rapphannock, is not without some interesting history. It is not only one of the oldest villages in Virginia, and was not only one of the most important ports in this country more than a century ago, but it is the birthplace of James Madison, the fourth President of the United States.

The unpretentious mansion in Port Conway, where, in March, 1751, James Madison first saw light, was held in high esteem, and was visited by multitudes of sightseers for many years. But the Madison mansion has long since succumbed to the ravages of time, and now a huge depression in the ground and some moss-covered bricks and stones—the remains of the old cellar—are all that remain to mark the spot where our country's fourth President was born. It is very near by this old cellar, grown up with shrubbery, that Mr. Mason examined the wound in Booth's head. A few yards from that spot was the scene of the spirited conversation between Mr. Mason and the man who proposed to take one of his horses.

The Rappahannock River is less than half a mile wide at Port Conway, and directly opposite this village is Port Royal, in Caroline County, which enjoys the distinction of being one of the oldest towns in the United States, antedating Philadelphia and the other large cities of the country.

A HISTORIC FERRY.

The ferryboat in which Booth and party crossed the Rappahannock and the ferry franchise at that place belonged to Mr. William Rollins, who died a little more than a year ago. The "Port Conway ferry" had been in operation many years when the Civil War "broke out," and was for many generations the only ferry on the Rappahannock River, except the one at Fredericksburg, some thirty miles above. Hence Booth had to make the long, circuitous trip from Hooe's Neck to Port Conway, having been informed, it is supposed, that at no other point could he find facilities for crossing the Rappahannock into Caroline County.

Since it has been said that Mr. M. B. Ruggles, one of the gentlemen who happened to cross the Rappahannock with Booth, is survived by no "very near relatives," it may be proper to add here that his brother, Major Edward S. Ruggles, is still living and is one of the most prominent citizens and agriculturists of King George County. He was for years prominent in politics and public affairs, and for a few years he represented King George and Stafford counties in the General Assembly of Virginia.

There stands now a persimmon tree on the banks of Gambo Creek, a short distance from the home of Mrs. E. R. Quesenberry, on Machodoc Creek, and some of the old citizens of that community declare that Booth and Harold left their boat moored to that tree when they started across the country in a wagon toward Port Conway.

The wheels of the rickety spring wagon in which Booth traveled from Hooe's Neck to Port Conway occupied a corner in an old blacksmith's shop in King George County up to a few years ago. Several years after the close of the war this blacksmith shop was rented and operated by an old colored man who always said that the wheels were in the shop when he took charge of it, and so superstitious was he that he would never touch them. So they remained, dust-covered and decaying, in that corner as long as the old man lived.

What became of those old wagon wheels after his death is not known. It is believed that they were consumed by a fire which destroyed a part of the old shop a few years ago.

Frank G. Carpenter's Impressions of Berlin.

Continued from Page 1.

I pay 7½ cents for a soup, 25 cents for as much roast goose as I want and 37 cents for a beefsteak. Salads and sweets are proportionately cheap, and everything is well served.

There are many other good restaurants, some so housed that they would be considered palatial in the United States. The hotels have good meals, and all together one gets as much for his money here as at any place I know.

As to beer, the Germans make the best, and they know it. There are millions invested in beer gardens and beer halls in Berlin, and their income amounts to millions a year.

It is said that a million glasses are drunk every day, and this means about a half million quarts. The beer glasses here are regulated by law, and the ordinary drink is twice that of the United States.

There is a mark near the top of every glass made with a file, to which the beer must rise without foam, and the customer always insists on full glasses.

BEER OFTEN USED INSTEAD OF WATER.

Beer in Germany takes the place of water. I venture there are ten glasses of beer swallowed here to every glass of water, and also that there are hundreds of men who drink on the average something like a gallon a day.

Men, women and children drink early and late, and the total consumption surpasses conception.

One of our Consuls, of an arithmetical bent, recently made an estimate of the annual beer bill of the nation.

His figures show that the Germans swallow enough beer every year to make a lake six feet deep and more than a mile square, and so much that it will average forty gallons to every man, woman and child in the country.

Much of the beer drunken is Bavarian, which country is said to make the best beer of the world. Munich alone ships 9,000,000 barrels every year, and it drinks more than it ships.

The Nuremberger and the Pilsener beers are also largely used, and Berlin itself makes an excellent article.

FRANK G. CARPENTER.

How 35000 Elk Winter in Wyoming

WRITTEN FOR THE SUNDAY REPUBLIC.

The largest herd of wild animals in the United States, and probably in the world, is the great band of elk which winters in the lowlands of Jackson's Hole district, Wyoming.

There are at this writing estimated to be some 32,000 head of elk in the band. The men who have given this estimate are well-known ranchers and cattlemen, or cowboys and owners of sheep and stock ranges.

Their estimate comes pretty close to being a correct one.

During the severe winter in Wyoming, when the elk, driven by the bitter cold and heavy snows, approach almost to their very doors, they have unusual opportunities for observing the great herd of magnificent animals.

All the elk in Jackson's Hole district are carefully protected by the scattered residents of the country. At present the herd is under the constant surveillance of two deputy game wardens, while district game wardens carefully watch the band whenever any portion of it strays into the district over which they have authority.

In the summer time the herd is widely scattered over an extent of country the radius of which is over 500 miles, embracing a territory of virginal beauty and primeval grandeur.

Of those elk which enter Colorado a large percentage is killed, while the few which stray into Utah fall at the hands of the Uintah Ute Indians. The elk which wander too far from home are not killed in the summer, but in the late fall.

By far the larger portion of the herd which is guarded in the winter in Jackson's Hole passes the summer in the timbered heights in the Teton, Gros Ventre and Shoshone Mountains, the Big Horn Basin, the Yellowstone National Park and even in the free range near the settlement of Jackson itself.

One gentleman last summer counted a herd of 800 elk within two and a half miles of Jackson.

Within the last five years the elk have decreased 18,000 in number. This alarming decrease is due as much to the restriction of their natural range as to the efforts of sportsmen, Indians or commercial hunters, who, it is often alleged, have pursued the herd in order to obtain the much-prized elk's teeth for a certain fraternity.

In severe winter weather a great number of elk perish from starvation.

Rather than to venture to the lower pastures they flounder through the deep snows of the mountains, browsing from the buds of birch and quaking aspen.

A thaw, followed by severe cold weather, makes a heavy crust that proves the undoing of the emaciated elk. Then progress becomes so difficult as to prevent the animal from obtaining sufficient food.

It is often incorrectly stated that elk browse on sheathes of pine and firs.

If this was the case they would never starve, for their range abounds in conifers.

Very few elk are pulled down by wolves, cougars or other wild animals; in fact, they remain in the mountain altitudes long after the deep snows have driven these hungry marauders away, and the spring thaws reveal untouched carcasses of starved elk.

Elk are far and free travelers. They have not that strong love of locality which characterizes most members of the deer tribe, and when they once get under way they swing over the roughest ground and through dense forests of pine, up steep mountains covered with fairly impenetrable brush and windfalls, at almost the pace of a locomotive.

The big herd in Jackson's Hole is a considerable source of income to the residents of that country, and as such it is as carefully guarded as is possible in so wild and rough a region. A couple of years ago a newspaper correspondent who had made the trip into Yellowstone Park went further into the Jackson's Hole country.

Alarmed by the sight of a fence of whitened elk horns, he wrote his editor an article upon the indiscriminate slaughter of the elk.

He was mistaken, however, all these horns are shed by the elk in the early spring and are gathered during the cattle round-ups. In the fall when elk are shot the horns are fastened firmly to the skull, and unless one expects to have them separately mounted as trophies he does not trouble to detach them.

In their mental equipment elk are like cattle, caribou or reindeer. They do not posses the instinctive cunning of most members of the deer tribe.

One will sometimes see a band laboriously pawing the snow for pasture in some deep covered valley, while the summits and hogbacks have been blown clear by the wind.

Deer, horses, and even sheep, exhibit a keener reasoning in this respect.

Only erratic methods of travel and habits of migration, together with their tendency to retreat as far as possible from the outposts of civilization, have made the existence of a large band possible until now.

Electric Light Kills Bacteria.

It has been found that the bactericidal effect of the arc light is much superior to that of sunlight, because the very rapid ultraviolet radiation from the sun is absorbed by the atmosphere.

A rapid oscillation, high-tension arc, particularly when formed between iron points, gives off an abundance of ultraviolet rays of extremely short-wave length.

Quartz is transparent to this light, of which it transmits 62 per cent, but gelatine and an oxide of iron, even a thin film of it, are entirely opaque.

Ice is as transparent as air to these rays, but blood is opaque, and, accordingly, in applying them to the human body, they are passed through ice pressed upon the region affected so as to make it bloodless.—Youth's Companion.